



# **Everything Sucks: Losing My Mind and Finding Myself in a High School Quest for Cool**

*Hannah Friedman*

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**When everything sucks,**

**change everything . . .** And that's exactly what Hannah Friedman set out to do in an ambitious attempt to bust out of a life of obscurity and absurdity and into an alternate world of glamour, wealth, and popularity.

Being dubbed 'That Monkey Girl' by middle school bullies and being pulled out of sixth grade to live on a tour bus with her agoraphobic mother, her smelly little brother, and her father's hippie band mates convinces Hannah that she is destined for a life of freakdom.

But when she enters one of the country's most prestigious boarding schools on scholarship, Hannah transforms herself into everything she is not: cool. By senior year, she has a perfect millionaire boyfriend, a perfect GPA, a perfect designer wardrobe, and is part of the most popular clique in school, but somehow everything begins to suck far worse than when she first started. Her newfound costly drug habit, eating disorder, identity crisis, and Queen-Bee attitude lead to the unraveling of Hannah's very unusual life.

Putting her life back together will take more than a few clicks of her heels, or the perfect fit of a glass slipper, in this not-so-fairy tale of going from rock bottom to head of the class and back again.

## Everything Sucks: Losing My Mind and Finding Myself in a High School Quest for Cool Details

Date : Published August 3rd 2009 by HCI Teens

ISBN : 9780757307751

Author : Hannah Friedman

Format : Paperback 256 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Young Adult, Teen, Biography

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# **From Reader Review Everything Sucks: Losing My Mind and Finding Myself in a High School Quest for Cool for online ebook**

**Kathy (Bermudaonion) says**

Hannah Friedman's parents are what I like to call free spirits. Her dad is a not quite successful hippie musician and her mom is a former animal trainer who has taken in a monkey that is treated like a member of the family. They did off-beat things like build a car to resemble a shoe and take Hannah and her brother out of school for a year to join them on a band tour of England.

Hannah is very bright and hard working, but had a lot of trouble fitting in socially in middle school. Thinking that she would fit in better at a prep school, Hannah applied, and was accepted to one of the most prestigious schools in the country. She felt like she had a fresh start and worked hard at being cool and found that she was! She was part of the popular crowd, she was class president and she had a cool, older boyfriend. But along with all of that, she developed a drug habit and an eating disorder. She also felt like she was watching her life instead of living it.

Thankfully, Hannah saw how self-destructive her habits were and how shallow her "friends" were before it was too late to change her life. When she began her college career, she was thrilled when someone from her past recognized her and called her "Monkey Girl" – a name she used to despise.

It took me a few chapters to get into EVERYTHING SUCKS by Hannah Friedman, but once I did, I couldn't put the book down! Hannah is brutally honest in her memoir and I really got attached to her and her misguided attempts to fit in. I was appalled by the actions of some of the girls in this book and can't help but wonder why adults dismiss such behavior. This book made me realize just how much more difficult it is to grow up in today's society than it was back in the dark ages of my youth.

I think everyone who has a child (especially a daughter) approaching high school should read EVERYTHING SUCKS. There is some language, drug use and sexual situations in it, but I think it presents a very realistic picture of what young people of today face. I also think students who are struggling to fit in may find some comfort in this book because it shows that fitting in isn't all it's cracked up to be.

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**Joyce Baker says**

Joyce Baker  
Humor

While trying to find a book to read for humor, I ran across this book on Amazon. It received nothing but praises: four and five stars. So I took the leap and purchased the book.

The book is about the author, Hannah Friedman, who was trying to become cool in high school. She had a hard time in middle school. She was dubbed the monkey girl along with other euphemisms. After her "chocolate milk misdemeanor", her mother decided she can go to a private school if she can get a scholarship. Hannah believed it was her opportunity to re-invent herself.

Hannah created herself at Danforth Academy. She became a part of the 'Great Eight' and even made the

Dean's List but Hannah did not stop there. She tested the boundaries of eating disorders, sex, drugs, friends, and even alcohol. In the end, Hannah graduated and is accepted into Yale University. Again, she wrote the universe a letter before she began her journey at Yale. In this letter, Hannah is less concerned about popularity and more concerned with finding and loving herself.

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## **Trupti Dorge says**

Rating: 4.25 out of 5

If I have to use just one word to describe this book, it would be "Honest". Hannah Friedman is very upfront about everything-sex, drugs, peer pressure and so much more that teenagers deal with. What I mean by honest is that she doesn't say I did drugs and sex at a young age and found out that it's really bad and you shouldn't do it and wait to find real love and all that stuff. She puts it the way it is. She delves into things that most of us would like to forget and never talk about. So in a way, I see many teenagers or probably even adults applauding her for being so upfront.

Everything Sucks is a memoir of a teenage girl, the author, who is born into a dysfunctional family. Her dad was a struggling musician and he took Hannah out of school for a year of traveling and touring. Also, she has a monkey as a sister. Just when Hannah thought she would be labeled as a freak forever, she is granted scholarship in a prestigious school, a school where all the rich kids study. Here she experiences different kind of pressure and issues.

So basically what I want to say is, you might like this book if you ever thought you would never fit in or even if you had absolutely no problems in high school ever. It's just a funny and honest look at the authors teenage years.

I just thought I would mention that I really wouldn't like a girl younger than 15 to read this book. But I'm not really sure. Considering how advanced today's teenagers are, I wouldn't be surprised if a 12 year old can relate to this book.

First posted at <http://violetcrush.wordpress.com/2009...>

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## **Jennifer Wardrip says**

Reviewed by Amber Gibson for TeensReadToo.com

EVERYTHING SUCKS is the blase and brazen memoir of Yale graduate Hannah Friedman, recounting those awkward childhood and teenage years when everything truly does suck.

Imagine being a first-born human child only to live in the shadows of a monkey. Thus begins Hannah's life, with Amelia the monkey as an older sibling of sorts who can get away with anything. Hannah's mother saved Amelia from an opium withdrawal death and adopted her into the family. Amelia repaid the favor by garnering a Hollywood movie role that bought the Friedmans' house. While there might be a few pros to having a monkey at home, ultimately it just really sucks. Hannah becomes known as The Monkey-Girl Freak

at school and, try as she might, she never can quite integrate herself into public school social circles.

When her father uproots the family to the United Kingdom for a whirlwind music tour to promote his new album, Hannah balks at the idea. No, her father - Dean Friedman - is not a rock star, rather a one-hit wonder from the 1970s. Hannah is dragged along for the ride, witnessing a colossal bust of a tour, though there are some fun Twinkie dinners and eccentric people to brighten up the rainy days.

Back in middle school, Hannah is determined to reinvent herself. Perhaps with her newfound worldliness she can charm her way into the upper echelon of popularity. Alas, her dreams are shattered when she finds herself even lower (if that's possible) on the totem pole than before.

Imagine Hannah's surprise when she transfers to a private boarding school and finds herself inadvertently in the midst of the most popular and glamorous clique there is. Unfortunately, the world she now finds herself in is more complicated, bitchy, superficial, and ugly than she ever would have guessed from its glossy appearance. The constant battle for supremacy is consuming - everyone strives to be the sexiest and thinnest while backstabbing anyone who gets in the way. The drama takes its toll on Hannah, whose values and self-esteem are easily molded by those around her. Eating disorders and drug problems aside, Hannah is finally becoming the girl she always imagined she could be.

Translation: This sucks way more than being Monkey-Girl Freak ever did.

Friedman successfully recaptures her teenage angst and desperate need to fit in, reliving some of the most embarrassing and difficult times of her life thus far. For most young college graduates, writing a memoir is out of the question. The result would be a dreadfully boring, typically short-sighted narrative. Friedman, on the other hand, can already reflect thoughtfully on her experiences of the recent past and provide a heartbreakingly honest voice of the teenage girl.

While EVERYTHING SUCKS occasionally harmonizes with Mean Girls, Friedman's autobiographical foray is unique in its approach. Simply put, she tells it like it is.

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## **Jamie To says**

Hannah Friedman's *Everything Sucks* tells the story of her younger self trying to grow up, a teenager wanting nothing more than popularity. The book is set to her high school years, a place where cliches and social standing are everything. Wanting nothing more to be popular and to fit in, she changes herself, in a way, for the worst. The book examines on how no matter what you pretend to be, your true self will always appear.

The most memorable scene in the book was when she gets over her drug addiction. She learns that its something she doesn't need to be popular and beautiful. I admire this scene because it shows how she changes over the course of this book from someone who depended on materialistic things to someone who could put it behind.

Ultimately, the story of Hannah Friedman's life is how she looks back on her teenage life, all the peer pressure, and wanting to be someone that she wasn't. It shows her looking back and reminiscing on the way she messed up her life due to the standards of society. It shows her life from the beginning and how her

bumpy road began.

I totally would recommend this book, especially to teenage girls in high school. This book can relate to a lot of things girls this generation has to go through. The peer pressure of popularity, sex, and drugs. This book to me, is a reference to how the cliché high school, growing up, and trying to fit in is.

Reading this book made me learn that i should always be myself, and not to try to be something I'm not. it can definitely and most likely backfire. Ive learned to connect her experiences with my own and compare it. When i say it connects to many girls in high school, its me included.

In the end, people realize who they truly are. They might be clouded from judgement along the road, but once the sun comes out you'll find yourself. The bumps along the road are learning lessons. Every mistake will teach you in the long run and in my opinion, thats what this story is trying to show us. Mistakes are made, but in the end we learn from them.

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### **Alea says**

I really liked Hannah's voice. She comes off as very relatable. Just a girl trying to get through childhood and her teen years without being picked on and having some friends to hang out with. Instantly when Hannah starts telling her tale you know she doesn't come from your average family, a mother that trained monkeys for a living and one just so happens to be part of her family, for longer than Hannah has been part of it! And a musician father who takes them on tour with him. She also has a little brother that we don't learn I whole ton about in the book but he's there in the background.

Things really get rolling when Hannah is accepted to a private school for high school. It's a boarding school but it's still local for her so for the most part she commutes. Once Hannah really has the chance she easily makes friends in a variety of groups (the train kids, the preppy girls, rich hippies). At one point her dad starts a band at her school which is rather embarrassing for Hannah but proves to be another way for her to make some friends. Eventually Hannah is introduced to a darker side of adolescence through drugs and the world of eating disorders. It makes for a real and honest look at what teens can face but through it all Hannah remains relatable.

So while her story can be serious at points it's also can be really funny. Hannah's memoir almost reads like fiction at some points, she's so candid and funny it's crazy to believe this is her life and not a work of fiction. She has a way with words and situations you can't help but love her and hope that wherever her life takes her she is successful. I'd say she's pretty unforgettable.

Hannah covers a lot of ground in her memoir and in her life at such a young age. I really hope she continues to write and share her experiences. I'd also love to see her try her hand at fiction!

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### **Steph Bowe says**

I can honestly say that Hannah Friedman is incredibly brave to write such an honest and intimate memoir about her teenage years; most of the things in this book you can probably file under Things People Don't Talk About. Sex, drugs, eating disorders - all are dealt with in a way that's unflinchingly honest, and I think

teenaged readers will really appreciate that. From reading the back cover blurb, this novel sounds like a pot luck of teen issues, and you might think that it's going to be the kind of thing where there's some overarching moral (Teen sex leads to slow and painful death, Recreational drug use is flat-out evil, etc), but really it's just a recollection of her experiences, and there's no need for there to be some message behind it all.

I'm not going to give an age rating here, mainly because I think teenagers should be able to decide for themselves what they want to read. As long as you're comfortable with books that have cursing, sex and drug use, this book is definitely worth a read. It's such a frank portrayal of life as a teenager, and I think that young readers will take a lot out of it. I didn't expect this novel to be anywhere near as truthful or as dark as it is; it was definitely a memorable book, and all high-schoolers will find something to relate to in it.

One more thing I'll mention is the Newsweek article Hannah wrote whilst still at high school. It's worth having a look at, and then reading the book to see the negative reaction she received from peers and teachers. Overall, this book gives the reader (okay, me) a sense that they're not alone in their high school experiences. I can say that though I've never been to a private high school, or bullied, or taken drugs I still found this book to touch on things I'd experienced myself, and I went: Thank God, maybe I will make it out of this alive.

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## **Michelle says**

"I am beginning to question whether I should give up on memoirs altogether. It seems that almost every one that I read lately has not really grabbed me. Maybe my issue is the fact that I had such high expectations for Everything Sucks. The title alone gave me hope - that and the fact that a fellow blogger recommended this book earlier this year. Unfortunately, I am left feeling rather meh about it, and I am not happy with that.

[return][return][return]At first, I found this book painful in a good way. It made me look back upon my own teenage years, which I feel is in keeping with this year of personal development and reflection. I realized that everyone experiences the same doubt, pain, and suffering while in high school. Then, I started to reflect. Here's my problems with Ms. Friedman's story:[return][return][return]First of all, the synopsis makes it seem as if her extreme behavior is just that - extreme. However, I found the problems were not as obvious or extreme as they were made to appear. I never got the impression that Hannah ever truly fit in to the popular crowd; she makes mention of the fact that she cannot afford the same designer clothes that her friends purchase, and she also discusses the backstabbing ways of her closest ""friends"". Her food issues are understated, as are the drug problems. So, I went in expecting this major drama and extremist behavior and just was not satisfied on that end.[return][return][return]Then, I realized that yes, high school does suck. There is tremendous pressure to fit in, get good grades, but millions of people don't turn to drugs or bulimia to fit in. We all contemplate the idea of a fresh start during high school; Ms. Friedman gets that chance and almost ruins her life during it. This got me thinking - what gives her the right to complain about this? She made her choices all on her own. No one forced her to start taking drugs or binge and purge. So life sucks in high school. So what? It sucks because she made the wrong choices. The self-righteous tone adopted throughout the book as Ms. Friedman tries to justify her high school behavior to her readers really began to bother me.[return][return][return]Also, I do recognize that Ms. Friedman overcame some major issues. However, how exactly did she recover? At one point in time in the book, she has a major drug problem and is severely bulimic. Then, she is in college with no problems. At no point in time, she makes no mention of rehab or how she recovered. This is a major failing given the target audience. I do recognize the fact that Everything Sucks would be powerful reading for teens, which concerns me about the lack of discussion regarding resolutions to her problems. The drug and eating problems were severe enough to require medical attention of some sort, and to avoid discussing this part of the story may give those same teen readers the idea that they too can miraculously resolve their issues without any outside help. It is extremely misleading,

in my opinion, and also quite a dangerous omission.[return][return][return]As I mentioned, I imagine this memoir to be quite popular among teenagers, but I found it whiny and pretentious as an adult. Then again, I am more than convinced that memoirs are not for me. Honestly, I start thinking about why publishers/ people feel their stories are better than others, and it bothers me. If I could relate more to Ms. Friedman, I might have felt differently about this particular book, but her whining grated on my nerves and her life choices caused me to shake my head in frustration. I am glad that I read the book, if only to be more aware of the pressures my own children may face when they get to high school."

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## **Blog on Books says**

Hannah speaks to every girl I know from the very first pages of her memoir titled 'Everything Sucks.' From beginning to end, the book speaks loudly to adolescent girls with a wit that only a Yale graduate (later to become a blogger extraordinaire) could achieve.

That Hannah's writing is extremely catchy, funny and smart is an understatement. The book highlights familiar childhood and teen years that are equally applicable to today's generation. She begins her story alluding to the fact that "You see, I am the firstborn human, but Amelia is the firstborn." Meaning that Hannah is her mother's firstborn child, but Amelia, her mother's monkey, is the actual firstborn of her family. Of course, competition started at home for Hannah. "No matter how many cute shenanigans I pull, I am forever outshined by a family member who garners wild applause simply by serving herself spaghetti with her own foot."

Throughout the book Hannah describes the trials and tribulations she encountered. "The first diet failed, the second diet failed, the third diet failed, but this time I will be strong. I sit in math class and feel my stomach growl." She goes on to speak candidly about being "a cutter", experimenting with drugs in college, relations with her boyfriend Adam, her parents, and success in school. The path that Hannah takes is frightening from the beginning to end. At age 22, Hannah is a recent graduate of Yale University, an award-winning writer, blogger, and playwright. In the end, through sharing her story, Hannah has been able to give a gift to help young women overcome many of the same "crazy obstacles" that she had. - Tara Benson

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## **Strawberry says**

3 1/2 stars

This should be required reading for any author who wants to nail down the angst and insecurities of many American teenage girls. Yes, sometimes something as insignificant and ridiculous as tiny red bumps on arms can cause a girl massive anxiety and make her utterly delusional as it did with Hannah in one scene. I often feel that in most YA novels I read, the characters have been so sanitized and airbrushed that they are barely human, Hannah is a nice change from that.

Of course, that might be because this book is actually not a novel at all but a memoir written somewhat like a YA novel. Which also makes me feel bad about saying that the main reason I gave this 3 1/2 stars and not higher is because the parents and the monkey were so freaking annoying that every scene they were in, I found myself grinding my teeth to the point of causing myself jaw pain.

It's amazing because if characters like that or like the other one-dimensional cliché characters that appear in

this book appeared in a real novel, we'd all be going 'No way! That could never happen in real life!' and more and more cliché characters (for example the disciplinarian freak who bans flip-flops at school and expels a favorite student that even the teachers love) you begin to recognize as you advance through the book and you see more and more basic archetype characters like this, it does become frustrating, but I suppose, if it really happened then what can you do?

So, it's not her fault her life was filled with shitty YA book clichés for castmates but still I must deduct stars because I read books to enjoy them, not to endure agitating garbage. Her voice and writing style are pretty dead on and fun to read (listen to actually! She narrates her own audiobook and does a professional quality job!) (If you're the kind who likes reading EVERYTHING SUCKS BECAUSE I'M A CLUELESS INSECURE LITTLE GIRL type rants,) (Contrast with Cindy Ella which was also the same tone but way more delusional and up her own ass. Hannah, on the other hand has had time to reflect and grow as a human and write with the knowledge of lessons already learned. Cindy Ella's author's excuse? Maybe too busy smashing fingers into a keyboard in rage to actually remember that the rants written for entertainment purposes should be fun and relatable.) hence I'm rolling this up to a 4 rather than rolling down to a 3.

Why hasn't she written more books? I'd like to see an actual YA novel from her!

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### **adrienna says**

Seems like the author got done watching Mean Girls and decided to write her memoir. It didn't feel authentic at all.

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### **Christine Zegelis says**

Everything Sucks: Losing My Mind and Finding Myself in a High School Quest for Cool was certainly a delightful romp through the angst-ridden teen years of Hannah Friedman and her dreams of being popular. Actually, normal would be a vast improvement from her social standing when she enters middle-school. The fact that her sister is a monkey, her mom considers wearing a scarf in a car is an “invitation for decapitation”, her father builds a shoe car to take her and her little brother to school in the fifth grade, and she completely misses sixth grade to tour with her family and her dad's band has not encouraged any votes in the popularity contest.

Each chapter describes a new thing that sucks: family, periods, popularity, diets, love and sex are just a few of the subjects. Ms. Friedman is brutally honest in sharing her experiences and she is honest when telling of her decisions (good or bad) that she has made in response to peer pressure and the need to fit in. Her observations are cleverly written and with such humor that I found myself giggling out loud. Yet, there are terrifying moments as well (drug use, dieting) where I held my breath.

Ms. Friedman is a very young, very talented and very open writer. I worried that her age may be a factor in my relating to this memoir. Let me just say...nope, nada!! The subjects that are covered are universal for any age. I found myself thinking back to junior and senior high school (um, punk rocker here, not the definition of a popular chick) and recalling some of the same situations Ms. Friedman experienced. I certainly hope this is just the first of many linguistic journeys. I for one cannot wait.

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## **Vicki Jaeger says**

This book is about a young woman who desperately wants to be popular and have a feeling of belonging. In order to do so, she does everything--anorexia/bulimia, smoking pot, eventually becoming addicted to cocaine. Someone should have told her to become comfortable in her own skin and the rest would have worked out.

This was an advance reading copy that didn't include the end of the book. By the time I finished this piece of it, I was pretty disgusted with this self-centered spoiled little girl, and really didn't care to read the end.

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## **Mishel Forte says**

Being called "that monkey girl" gets old very, very quickly. Having a monkey for a sister and eccentric parents isn't the worst thing in Hannah's life. Throw in a smelly little brother and you got yourself a party though. Hannah's middle school years are filled with a multitude of embarrassing moments and constant teasing. Then her parents pull her out of school for a UK tour for her musician father - who's last hit was sometime in the 1970s. She's dragged along on a great big disappointment but feels ready to start anew when she gets back to middle school. Surely her new worldly aquired knowledge will impress someone and bump her up on the popularity scale....Yeah, no - doesn't happen. Hannah finds herself lower than ever before.

But things change drastically when it's time for Hannah to go to high school. She gets accepted into a private boarding school, although she commutes because it's so close to home. She finds herself easily making friends and is pretty surprised when the most popular group of girls wants her in their clique. After she comes down from her euphoric feeling of finally having friends Hannah sees the ugliness of high school drama. Nothing but bitchy, backstabbing, superficial competition all wrapped up in lip gloss and short skirts.

Hannah covers all the horrors of adolescence that I think will resonate with everyone. Drugs, sex, eating disorders... Hannah doesn't hold back. She highlights the good times of her life and doesn't shy away from highlighting the bad either. I can't tell you how many times I laughed while reading this book. I don't even know Hannah and yet I absolutely adore her. Sarcastic, witty, and absolutely charming - Hannah's voice is entirely real and honest. But all hysterics aside there is some serious issues being dealt with and you'll find Hannah's story can be heartbreaking at times.

Judge Hannah however you like but I think in the end you will respect her for being so honest and come to appreciate what she has to say. She's not saying anything new, but I think everyone will be able to relate to something in her story. I'm really looking forward to see what she has in store for us next.

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## **Jade Chau says**

Hannah Friedmen's Everything Sucks tells the story of her life experience in high school, a weird nerdy looking teenager, who believes that fitting in will make her life better than it is before. The book is set to her high school years, a dull place that many girls set their quest to become "popular." Wanting nothing more to be less than a freak, Hannah changes her clothing, morals, and mind set to be accepted by the girls, who claim to be popular and rich. The book examines on how no matter how people want to change, people will

eventually turn out who they are truly suppose to be.

The most memorable scene in the book is the transition of how "monkey freak girl" turned into the most beautiful, popular girl in school, which turned her to becoming a drug addict. Hannah claims to be beautiful, which is a false statement according to the boys in high school, and the stress that came onto to her to be a perfectionist, lead her to depend on drugs. Hannah had everything she ever longed for, but the stress of living up to that "perfect girl" overwhelmed her. As soon as she realize that she messed up her life, Hannah, a woman who tried all drugs to occupy herself from her own thoughts, quit her bad habits and realizes that she should be content with who she is, not having to change for anybody or anything to be happy.

Ultimately, the story of Hannah Friedmen's life is a story of how she was behaving carelessly, speeding through high school with drugs and alcohol, and partially trying to remember what she did the nights before of attending to parties, which never ended well.

It all adds up to a tale of a teenager's desires to try everything their parents prevent them from trying,an example for all ages between 12-18 alarming parents, these are kinds of curious teens they warned us about. Everything sucks tells that the story very beautifully, reminding us to that there is so much more in life if people took the time to appreciate what they have, instead of depending on drugs to escape reality even for a little while.

I would recommend this book to everything because Hannah Friedmen's lifetime story is simply amazing and touching of how she overcame the use of drugs. This experience of hers can relate to many teens today, of how they care more about fitting in than their school work and health. This shows us that people do overcome bad experiences, most learning a lesson for a life time. Many teen girls would also like to read this book because she also speaks upon having her first boyfriend and how heartbreak is not welcomed but happens anyway.

From reading this book, I learn that for every bad experience there is a lesson to learn from. Some people take it in a positive manner or others dwell on their mistakes. It takes courage to overcome a bad habit because once it is easier to gain a bad habit than to break one it, due to your comfort zone. Many people don't have the courage to get out of their comfort zone because the feeling of being awkward and uncomfortable is a lot to deal with, but that is how some risks that are yet to be taken.

Every bad experience will scar us for life, but this book made me can relate to my high school life. Fitting in played a big part in my life until I realized that I felt content with who I am and changing for my friends or boys isn't an option anymore. I enjoyed reading this book because it made me feel that anything that bad happens will pass over, and how people react to it is upon them. Also, I felt that I was in the book while reading because it relates to how high school is going for me also.

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